Dualities and Binary Oppositions in Robert L. Stevenson's "Treasure Island"

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Diplomski rad

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Rijeka, 2015.

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Introduction

Robert Louis Stevenson might be one of those forgotten authors of our generation. Yet, his most prominent works brought us literary characters which are models for many contemporary fictional heroes and anti-heroes. The most knowledgeable are his pirates from *Treasure Island*, exemplary for all later literary and film pirates as the bipolar Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, reprocessed in so many forms but never tiresome.
But why are these 19th century characters still compelling to the modern man? The answer to this question may lie in the engaging persona of Robert L. Stevenson whose narratives explored and portrayed the flaws and shortcomings of a superficially impeccable society; something he has in common with modern-day novelists and critics.

First in his essays and then in his novels and short stories, Stevenson became fascinated with binary oppositions in Victorian society. Being his first novel *Treasure Island* may not seem the best choice to study dichotomies in comparison to his following works like *The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mister Hyde.* My attempt was to show that his first book is as much filled with dichotomies that comment on Victorian society as his other literary achievements. Using the method of interpretation and comparison of essays, studies and literature relevant to the subject I have found that *Treasure Island* is a true adventure story enjoyable for all generations. However, it is also a profound criticism of the dualistic Victorian world. Stevenson's plots, characters, settings and language serve as instruments to castigate the Victorian view on religion, morality, money, imperialism and other constructs of the 19th century English society.

1. On dualism, binary oppositions and Victorians

Stevenson was born into the mid-Victorian era (1851-1875), a time of stability, prosperity and progress. During this period most Victorians were proud of their strict and stoic culture. At its core were religion, tradition, capitalism and morality.[1] They encouraged values that were supported by religious and philosophical doctrines of the age which ultimately resulted in a black or white world view. This black or white attitude is translatable into dualism or binary oppositions.

Binary opposition is a key concept of structuralism. Structuralism is a theory that arose in the 20th century when the Victorian age had already ended but it introduced explanatory terms for the dualistic world view common to the West. The theory states that the organization of social phenomenon could be clarified through a detailed elaboration of their subtending structures, which collectively testify to a deeper and all-inclusive social rationality.[2] This means that we must observe all structures of a certain culture (language, religion, social order etc.) and their relation to one another to understand it.

According to French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss the units in a structure tend to group in binary pairs or oppositions, consisting of two terms in some sort of relation to one another. French philosopher Jacques Derrida explored this notion further. He stated that within such a structure based on binary pairs one part of the pair always has a higher cultural value than the other. One part of the pair is marked positive and the other negative. In Western culture pairs like good/evil and light/dark exist, where both good and light are preferable to evil and dark. The fibers of society are structured in binary pairs.[3] This definition of binary pairs explains that good cannot be defined without evil which means that one side has meaning only when related to the other. Victorians expected everyone to belong to a certain class, to be Church of England or Nonconformist, respectable or devious, a gentleman or an idler and so on.

[1] Sally Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996): 7. eBook.
[2] Robert Audi, *The Cambridge dictionary of philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999): 883. eBook.
[3] Mary Klages, *Literary theory: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006): 31-33. eBook.

Victorians defined ‘respectability’ and it was everything ‘devious’ was not, hence a binary pair.

Derrida proposed that Western culture favors rigid systems; order and stability over disorder and instability. In linguistic terms Western culture prefers a single and solid signification; one signifier connected to one signified rather than ambiguity or multiplicity of meaning.[4] The Victorians disliked vagueness because an undefined individual did not comply with imperialistic ideals. One such ideal was the British gentleman clearly characterized by class, values and virtues. Those characteristics were the signifiers of the signified gentleman.

However, within the grasp of literature language tends to operate loosely. Derrida’s deconstruction method of critical analysis argues that all systems have moments when structures get shaken and those binary pairs start to slide around and refuse to stay in absolute opposition. When this happens, ambiguity and multiplicity take over.[5] In their effort to stay in place, the binary pairs create an obscure ‘in-between’. This ‘in-between’ is the blurred area where the meanings of the oppositions become unclear and dubious.
In the moment that occurs literature becomes an exceptional instrument to explore dualities within a seemingly perfect society; exposing the existence of an ambiguous world that is both good and evil. Stevenson constructed *Treasure Island* on many dichotomies, challenging society to accept its true dualistic nature within his narratives.

[4] Klages: 55-57
[5] Klages: 60

2. Life and work of Robert L. Stevenson

Robert Louis Stevenson was born in 1850 in Edinburgh, Scotland. Healthy at birth, he later became a very delicate child suffering from constant respiratory ailments which would follow him throughout life. Because he was often bedridden, reading became one of his favorite pastimes. His mother and nanny encouraged this love for reading and story making. His nanny often amused him with various stories of adventure and Scotland, themes which would always remain an integral part of Stevenson's narratives[6].

The Stevenson family ideologically represented the essence of morality, stability and comfort[7] because they belonged to the upper-middle class. Yet, Stevenson never rose to this ideal.

His first literary attempt came at the age of six when he dictated a story about Moses to his mother. She later stated that from that time "it was the desire of his heart to become an author". His school days began at the age of nine, but were often interrupted by his illness and travels with his family. In Victorian schools, boys were taught to take their place in the hierarchy. However, his father never forced him to study; he roamed the school and only attended classes which interested him. At this age he started reading extensively and one of his favorite books was *Robinson Crusoe*; a story which would influence his narratives intensely[8].

At thirteen his health improved and Stevenson began enjoying the company of his peers. He often invented games for them to play; 'crusoing' being one of his favorites. This playfulness and inclination towards adventure became great assets in his life as he sought inspiration for his stories. He spent many hours on the top floor of his house practicing his writing skills. Stevenson never doubted his writing would pay off one day.

His father, however, had different plans for his only son. It was common practice for boys to follow the footsteps of their respected fathers. Boys needed schooling to reproduce their

[6] Jacqueline M. Overton, *The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson for boys and girls* (New York: Charles Scribets sons, 1933): Chapter II. eBook.

[7] Mitchell: 17-18

[8] Overton: Chapter II

parents' lifestyle and were under the father's authority until they made their own way in the world[9].

Stevenson's father wanted him to become the sixth generation of engineers to hold a place on the Board of Northern Lights. Stevenson eventually entered the University of Edinburgh and spent three and a half years studying for a degree[10]. Instead of complying with his father's wishes Stevenson was idling through university and skipping classes. Knowing he wouldn't succeed, Stevenson dreaded to tell his family. His father encouraged his writing but not as a profession. Stevenson confessed and after much debate left engineering and agreed to enter law school[11]. The years meant to mindlessly model Stevenson into a proper Victorian gentleman were in fact spent on introspection and an inner struggle of belonging.

At twenty-one he studied law which left him some time to work on his writing; estranging him from his parents. Stevenson's father was openly disappointed because his son became what he called 'an idler' (always out of money, dressed in eccentric clothing and mingling with the lower depths instead of his social circle)[12]. Victorian England rested on an underlying structure determined by social class which was revealed in manners, speech, clothing, education and virtues[13]. Stevenson began discarding aspects of his class; not to spite his father but because he wished to explore different perspectives of the same society. Victorians believed that each class had its own standards and people were expected to conform to the rules of their class[14], however, Stevenson was far from a conformist even in the religious sense of the word.

Religion became another troublesome issue since he had independent religious opinions. The Stevenson family was Presbyterian which, at the time, was marked Nonconformist by the Church of England. Stevenson became an agnostic under the influence of Darwin's book which had provoked a crisis of faith and a spiritual reform in Victorian England[15]. Darwin's assertions shook the great minds of the era and Stevenson was no exception. Religion

[9] Mitchell: 17-20
[10] Overton: Chapter III
[11] Overton: Chapter IV
[12] "Robert Louis Stevenson Biography", Encyclopedia of World Biography, accessed July 14, 2015, http://www.notablebiographies.com/Sc-St/Stevenson-Robert-Louis.html
[13] Mitchell: 17-20
[14] Mitchell: 17-20
[15] Mitchell: 244

developed into a matter of debate and criticism; a theme Stevenson often revisited in his stories.

When he finally passed the law exam in 1875, Stevenson pretended to practice law for a few months but eventually gave up and turned to writing once more. He had tried twice to comply to the Victorian norm but failed to fit his predestined mold.

His first essays were published in *The Portfolio* and in the *Cornhill Magazine*. In 1876, he met his future wife, Fanny Osbourne, an American women separated from her husband with two children and eleven years his senior. This was yet another unapproved addition to his eccentric lifestyle.

During this time, he wrote many essays and unsuccessful plays like *Deacon Brody*[16]. He managed to publish his first book in 1878, *The Inland Voyage,* recollecting his adventures during a canoe trip of canals in Belgium and France[17].

In 1879, Stevenson decided to roam California to experience the emigrant life. He documented the experiences and observations of his travels in *The Amateur Emigrant* (1895). As he travelled the US, Stevenson became ill and word of his illness reached his father. His father decided to grant him an allowance of 250 pounds a year. In the Victorian sense of allowance, this decision may have been a difficult and disappointing one for his father as it was expected from sons in their thirties to solely provide for their wives and families. Stevenson did not seem to care for society's disapproval as he had got enough money to support his small family and aspirations.

A year passed and it was time for Stevenson to return to Scotland. Back home, his health deteriorated as the Scottish climate did not soothe him. The family spent their summers in Scotland and winters in Switzerland or the South of France for the following four years[18]. Stevenson's bedridden days proved to be very productive for him as a writer. He matured as an essayist and published the collections of essays *Virginibus Puresque* (1881) and *Familiar Studies of Men and Books* (1882). The stories he collected in the *New Arabian Nights* (1883) marked the beginning of his adventure fiction[19].

[16] Overton: Chapter IV

[17] "Robert Louis Stevenson Biography", Encyclopedia of World Biography, accessed July 14, 2015, http://www.notablebiographies.com/Sc-St/Stevenson-Robert-Louis.html

[18] Overton: Chapter V

[19] "Robert Louis Stevenson Biography", Encyclopedia of World Biography, accessed July 14, 2015, http://www.notablebiographies.com/Sc-St/Stevenson-Robert-Louis.html

Stevenson wrote *Treasure Island* in 1881, published as a serial in the children's magazine *Young Folks* from 1881 to 1882. It was published as a novel in 1883. This novel established Stevenson as a writer. He finally gained praise for his writing. Stevenson received even more fame with his following works: *Kidnapped* (1886) and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), which made him internationally famous[20].

When his father died in 1887 Stevenson felt nothing tied him to Scotland any longer and decided to leave England. His popularity in the US rose with the successful dramatization of *Jekyll and Hyde* and Stevenson and his family settled in Saranac Lake for a year. Stevenson began writing *Master of Ballantrae* (1889) but the cold weather affected his ailing lungs. The Stevenson family decided to set out to cruise the South Sea Islands in 1889[21]. Even though he physically left Scotland and Victorian England, his narratives always fell back to his homeland and culture. Evolved as a writer, Stevenson began criticizing the culture he had experienced from a multitude of perspectives in his novels and short stories.

Stevenson realized that the climate on the island was good for his health and they settled on the island of Upolu in Samoa. He bought a plantation, built a house for his family and gained influence with the natives as he became involved in the history and politics of the island. His fascination with the island's culture stemmed from his critical view on imperialism as the island was a perfect example of the civilization-savagery dichotomy. The natives called him Tusitala (story teller) and he became a significant figure in all island affairs[22]. In this last chapter of his life Stevenson wrote down his observations of Samoan life in the collections: *In the South Sea* (1896), A *Footnote in History* (1892) and *Island's Night Entertainment* (1893). These stories were comments on England's imperial vision as Stevenson was painfully aware how imperialistic expansion severely damaged 'inferior' cultures.

He died of a stroke in 1894 and was buried in Samoa[23], leaving behind narratives which were meant to both entertain and broaden one's mind.

[20] "Robert Louis Stevenson Biography", Encyclopedia of World Biography, accessed July 14, 2015, http://www.notablebiographies.com/Sc-St/Stevenson-Robert-Louis.html

[21] Overton: Chapter VII

[22] Overton: Chapter VII

[23] "Robert Louis Stevenson Biography", Encyclopedia of World Biography, accessed July 14, 2015, http://www.notablebiographies.com/Sc-St/Stevenson-Robert-Louis.html

Stevenson lived an exciting and adventurous life but not without difficulty. He struggled between the reality of what was expected of him and the romantic idea of life. His inner desires collided with the wishes of his family and society regarding career choice and religious beliefs. The urge to travel and discover was often denied by his health. He lingered between the life of a gentleman and idler. These inner struggles are evident in his narratives, presented in the form of dichotomies or binary oppositions. ‘Tusitala’ knew how to compose a compelling story of adventure and warn impressionable young minds that life is not as black and white as it is presented by society.

2.1. Robert L. Stevenson's narrative style

In his essay *The Morality of the Profession of Letters* Stevenson wrote: "(…) all that we learn of past times and much that we learn of our own is through the medium of books and papers (…)"[24]. Books and words had played a pivotal role in Stevenson's life. He became particularly fond of them during his bedridden days; his most creative days.

Academics who have studied his works rely on Stevenson's essays to define his narrative style. Notably, the narrative style of his essays did not diverge much from the style in his novels. His style changed over time as he matured as both man and writer but certain aspects of it remained with him for life and are considered 'Stevensonian'[25]. Henry James, his life-long friend once said: "Before all things he is a writer with style".

Dury explains in his essay *Stevenson's Essays: language and style* that one aspect of such style is that it is carefully finished. Stevenson was a perfectionist; he reworked all of his writings with attention to both detail and overall effect[26]. Dury argues that certain aspects of the Stevensonian style are: lightness, playfulness and picturesque which stem from his desire to revive romanticism in the era where realism began to dominate literature[27]. Yet, it is noticeable in his narratives that Stevenson tended to move between romanticism and realism, which is evident in *Treasure Island*.

In *A Gossip on Romance* Stevenson argues: "In the highest achievements of the arts of words, the dramatic and the pictorial, the moral and the romantic interest, rise and fall together by a common and organic law"[28].

Many scholars agree that Stevenson's style possesses a 'lightness' and according to Calvino's idea of 'leggerezza' in literature this meant that "the signified are carried on a web of language as if weightless". Such a linguistic structure does not monopolize the reader's

[24] Robert L. Stevenson, *Essays in the Art of Writing*: *The Morality of the Profession of Letters,* Project Gutenberg, eBook: 47-75

[25] Richard Dury, "Stevenson's essays: language and style", *Journal of Stevenson studies 9* (2012): 49

[26] Dury: 43

[27] Dury: 55-66

[28] Robert L. Stevenson, *Memories and Portraits*. The University of Adelaide. eBooks@Adelaide. Ch. XV: A Gossip on Romance.

attention. Stevenson lightly carries the reader through his words and attention is given to both writing and the represented world[29]. *Treasure Island* is a valuable example of this 'lightness' because Stevenson never forces long descriptions of characters or places on the reader, but rather eases through the narrative in favor of action. The purpose of the descriptions is to allow the readers to mentally visualize and enter a certain mood.

Stevenson was a master of wordplay and language manipulation[30]. When the term 'playfulness' is used to describe Stevenson's style it refers to his often use of archaic, obsolete and colloquial words. Playfulness is not only apparent in his essays, but also in his novels. In his novels he often applies different types of speech or dialect to signify a change of character or mood. Good examples are *Treasure Island* where the pirates and the gentleman are easily differentiated by speech and *Master of Ballantrae* where the use of Scottish marks an emotional change. Language plays an important role in all his narratives where characters are often left without a visual description but are perfectly defined by the language they speak.

Alongside language, Dury argues that "a key word for Stevenson's stylistic variety and contrast is 'picturesque' which he often associates with picture making narrative and romance, but is also frequently associated with linguistic style"[31]. Stevenson himself gave a valuable comment on picturesque in his essay *Gossip on Romance* stating: "The threads of a story come from time to time together and make a picture in the web, the characters fall from time to time into some attitude to each other or to nature, which stamps the story home like an illustration"[32]. Dury adds that Uvedale Price broadened the meaning of picturesque to speech. He explained that picturesque in written form is full of unexpected turns, when it offers singular, yet natural points of view and when it displays contrasts which are never forced, but rather easily pass through the reader's attention[33].
These "wonderful contrasts", as Uvedale calls them, were the focus of Alice D. Snyder who analyzed Stevenson's use of paradox and antithesis in his essays. Her observations on how Stevenson used binary oppositions in his essays are essential to explaining how he presented them in his other works. She argues that Stevenson's use of paradox is 'unique because he

[29] Dury: 51-52
[30] Dury: 66
[31] Dury: 57
[32] Stevenson: A Gossip on Romance
[33] Dury: 57

does not use it as an associative device, but rather structures the whole essay around it'. Snyder further explains that Stevenson usually presented the meaning of two opposed antithetical terms, like good and evil and then elaborated on them until the reader came to understand that one pole includes the other[34]. In his essays Stevenson usually commented on literary antithetical terms. In his novels these binary oppositions came in the forms of character, setting and language with the purpose of criticizing worldly notions.

One more constituent of Stevenson's literary style are the books which influenced him as a writer. Stevenson openly said that he thought himself to write by imitating earlier writers[35]. He often acknowledged writers and books which aided his work. In his essay *Books which have Influenced Me* Stevenson wrote: "The most influential books, and the truest in their influence, are works of fiction. They do not pin the reader to a dogma, which he must afterwards discover to be inexact; they do not teach him a lesson, which he must afterwards unlearn. They repeat, they rearrange, they clarify the lessons of life; they disengage us from ourselves, they constrain us to the acquaintance of others; and they show us the web of experience, not as we can see it for ourselves, but with a singular change—that monstrous, consuming *ego* of ours being, for the nonce, struck out"[36]. It may be concluded that Stevenson believed the purpose of fiction was the autonomous exploration of life and the extraction of personal truths. He did not want to indoctrinate readers with his own beliefs; he rather offered a range of possibilities so the reader could decide for himself. This opposed the Victorian practice of writing popular fiction to promote Britain's greatness and flawlessness.
His love for fiction culminated when he began writing fiction himself, introducing *Treasure Island*.

[34] Dury: 43-44
[35] Dury: 45
[36] Robert L. Stevenson, *Essays on the Art of Writing,* Project Gutenberg, eBook: Books Which Have Influenced Me: 75-93.

3. *Treasure Island*

Stevenson referred to *Treasure Island* as his first book, even though his first book was *The Inland Voyage*. However, *Treasure Island* was his first literary success and that is why Stevenson considered it his first book. In his essay *My First Book: 'Treasure Island'* Stevenson comments: "By that time I had written little books and little essays and short stories, and got patted on the back and paid for them – yet not enough to live upon"[37]. Stevenson's financial situation was far from ideal. His essays did not pay well, but he surely noticed how adventure stories for boys were gaining popularity. In the era when childhood had been sentimentally idealized and schooling became obligatory, Stevenson seized his opportunity.

The idea for *Treasure Island* came to Stevenson one day while he was painting with his stepson. Stevenson wrote in his essay *My First Book*: "On one of these occasions I made a map of an island; it was elaborately (I thought) and beautifully colored, the shape of it took my fancy beyond expression: it contained harbors that pleased me like sonnets; and with an unconsciousness of the predestined, I ticketed my performance *Treasure Island*" He continued to write: "Somewhat in this way, as I paused upon my map of *Treasure Island*, the future chapters of the book began to appear there visibly among imaginary woods" [38].

Stevenson has given a great insight into how *Treasure Island* came to him. The creation of a simple map inspired him to finally put his thoughts to paper, as his life was already filled with journeys and adventure books which influenced the creation of his first successful adventure narrative. In his essay *A Humble Remonstrance* Stevenson explains that "a writer of boys' stories reproduces the substance of his own 'youthful daydreams'"[39], confirming that his own life motivated him to write a boys' adventure story.

Stevenson characterized *Treasure Island* as an adventure story for boys as he tried to readdress the lack of romance in contemporary novels full of stern social realism.

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[37] Robert L. Stevenson, *Essays in the Art of Writing* , Project Gutenberg, eBook, My First Book: 'Treasure Island': 111-135

[38] Stevenson, My First Book: 'Treasure Island': 111-135

[39] Hayden W. Ward, "'The pleasure of your heart': Treasure Island and the appeal of boy's adventure fiction", *Studies in the Novel*, University of Texas, Vol. 6, No 3 (1974): 305

Ward explains in his essay *The Pleasure of Your Heart: Treasure Island and the Appeal of Boys' Adventure Fiction* how romance allows a reader to temporary escape from the real world, to take a leap into the world of imagination[40]. *Treasure Island* is a fantasy world, it contains all the elements of an boys' adventure story; the hero is young and innocent, certain circumstances make him leave home, a journey to a strange and dangerous place, the hero is in pursuit of fortune, he encounters guardians and foes, he passes many tests of courage, intelligence and strength and he gains wisdom and self-knowledge[41]. These components were included in all adventure stories of the period, published in form of novels or serialized in magazines.

Treasure Island was first serialized in the boys' magazine *Young Folks* from October 1881 to January 1882 and published in book form in 1883[42]. Because it was serialized first, the book contains six parts divided into chapters. Each part is titled and aptly describes the focus of the chapters. The serialized form of the novel provides an atmosphere of suspense at the end of each chapter, creating a mysterious and uneasy mood which is tangible throughout the novel.

The first part (*The Old Buccaneer*) consists of six chapters where the protagonist Jim Hawkins is introduced at the Admiral Benbow inn, a small inn near Bristol owned by Jim's family. Stevenson draws the reader into the story as he introduces an old and suspicious pirate Billy Bones who holds the key of Jim's adventure. The elements of suspense and danger are present from the very beginning and are at the core of the story[43]. These six chapters rush the reader through series of events devised to set the stage for the main act – the journey to Treasure Island. The old sailor foreshadows the nature of the other pirates; he drinks excessively and scares the people in the inn with his stories until Dr. Livesey steps in, introducing himself as the authoritative figure of the narrative.

Several other pirates enter the story, plotting the theft of Bones' chest but in a turn of events Jim and his mother find the old buccaneer's chest before them. Inside lies the adventure's catalyst - the treasure map. Stevenson masterfully shrouded the map in a seemingly

[40] Ward: 305-306

[41] Parul Popat and Kaushal Kotadia, "Robert L. Stevenson's Treasure Island as an adventure novel", *Asian Journal of Multidimensional Research*, Vol. 2, No 6 (2013): 54

[42] "Robert Louis Stevenson", The Biography.com website, accessed July 16, 2015, http://www.biography.com/people/robert-louis-stevenson-9494571#final-years

[43] Popat and Kotadia: 53

unimportant oilskin, focusing on the money inside the chest at first only to reveal its importance when Jim begins to suspect it.

The significance of the map is discovered when Jim and his mother arrive at Squire Trelawney's house and the gentlemen examine the map. They become boyishly exited and immediately begin planning the journey.

In the second part (*The Sea-cook*) the characters prepare for the journey. Squire Trelawney acquires a ship called the *Hispaniola* while an acquaintance of his, an old one-legged sailor named Silver, helps him hire a crew. The Sea-cook is a central character of the story and Jim is introduced to him shortly after he arrives to Bristol. It does not take long for Jim to become fascinated with the old sailor as he shares his resentment towards pirates and fills the boy's head with stories of travels and captain Flint's notorious treasure. Boarding the ship, Jim meets Captain Smollett who is suspicious of Trelawney's hired crew. When Jim accidentally falls into an apple barrel the story takes an adventurous turn. He overhears the crew's plan of mutiny and reveals Silver's plans to Smollett and Trelawney before they reach land.

The third part (*My Shore Adventure*) is only three chapters long and follows Jim's endeavors on the island. The crew, led by Captain Smollett and Squire Trelawney, prepares to go ashore; not revealing that they know of the mutiny, hoping the fact might aid them. Jim smuggles himself ashore with the pirates and witnesses their cruelty and viciousness when Long John Silver murders a crew member who declined joining the mutiny. Frightened, Jim flees the sight and stumbles upon a raving sailor Benn Gunn. Jim learns that he was captain Flint's crew member and had been 'marooned' on the island for three years. Jim promises him safe passage home for the information of the treasure's location.

Part four (*The Stockade*) is marked by a change of narrator. Dr. Livesey takes over three chapters, possibly to inform the reader about the events on the ship during Jim's absence as well as ashore where Jim is not present thus incapable of narrating. In these chapters the gentlemen discover Jim is gone and Dr. Livesey goes ashore to find him, stumbling upon a stockade. He returns and assembles the loyal crew members; they stock up on provisions and await the mutineers' attack. When the attack commences Jim reenters the narrative for the remaining three chapters. When the assault seizes Silver approaches the stockade with a truce flag. He tries to negotiate with Smollett but the proud captain refuses his offer; the map in exchange for the safety of the crew. Smollett rightfully predicts retribution but the fight ends with more loss on the mutineers' side.

The promise of great fortune makes all the men ready to kill without hesitation, captivating the reader with exciting battles.

My Sea Adventure focuses on Jim taking matters into his own hands in all chapters. Livesey leaves the stockade to talk to Benn Gunn as Jim feels a yearning to act in a heroic fashion. He finds Gunn's hidden vessel and steers to the *Hispaniola*. The boy hero manages to cut the ropes and set the ship adrift. Strangely enough, the pirates take no notice and after a restless night Jim boards the ship. Jim strikes a deal with a drunk and wounded Israel Hands and they try steering the ship closer to shore. Being a deceitful pirate, Israeli Hands attacks Jim and they engage in a fight. Jim eventually shoots Hands remaining alone on the ship. He decides to swim ashore in search of the stockade and becomes the pirates' hostage.

Stevenson's focus on the interactions between the gentlemen and pirates instead of the treasure hunt indicates that the idea of fortune is more significant to the author than the physical form of the treasure.

The last part, titled *Captain Silver*, focuses on the most enigmatic character in the novel.

The first two chapters deal with Silver who has difficulties commanding his men. He creates an ally in Jim as he becomes leverage to the pirates. The pirate council decides Silver must abandon his position of captain. Silver plays on their greed and reveals he holds the infamous treasure map. The pirates side with Silver once more. Livesey briefly speaks to Jim the next day as he reveals the whereabouts of the *Hispaniola*.

Captain Silver presents a great variety of characters with the same obsessive goal – the mysterious treasure. Their colorful interactions and attempts to outwit one another are exceedingly more interesting than the quest itself at this point. Stevenson succeeded in turning words into swords when serious action was absent.

The treasure hunt finally commences the next morning. The reader is made to believe that the pirates hold the upper hand as they follow the map through the hills. They are spooked by eerie singing, but move on. At the spot marked "X" came the shocking revelation that the treasure had already been excavated. The gentlemen emerge and greet them with glee. They discover that Gunn moved the treasure long ago, rendering the map useless to the pirates.

It took the crew three days to load the gold onto the ship, after which they decided to sail back to Bristol; leaving three mutineers marooned on the island. In the end Jim narrates the fates of the remaining crew members and Long John Silver; the only pirate that managed to escape a marooned faith.

4. Binary pairs and dichotomies in *Treasure Island*

When the reader enters the world of *Treasure Island* he steps into what Stevenson called "a clean, open-air adventure" where "problems of the body and of practical intelligence are confronted, free of the workings of the abstract and ambiguous adult mind"[44]. In the prologue suitably titled "To the Hesitating Purchaser", Stevenson wishes to convince his future readers that they are about to experience an adventure in the manner of Kingston and Ballantyne[45]. Both authors wrote adventure stories for boys; Kingston wrote his acclaimed *Peter and the Whaler* and Ballantyne gained fame with *Coral Island*. Both narratives follow the 'Robinsonade' pattern; a boy ventures into unknown territories, faces many dangers, encounters both friends and foes and experiences delight and inner growth at the end. Stevenson apparently follows the formula but his divergence from the established pattern becomes evident with the analysis of dualities in the novel. The purpose of these dichotomies in *Treasure Island* was to scrutinize the seemingly flawless Victorian society. Stevenson was one of many authors that disapproved the Victorian way of life established on a mindset which was outdated in a rapidly changing world. Victorian culture was praised as superior and heavily promoted while the anguish and defects it carried were often ignored; forcing sensitive authors like Stevenson to expose its deceitful nature.

Stevenson sought important aspects of Victorian culture with the use of binary pairs or dualities because they reflected Victorian mentality and social order.
The dichotomies in Treasure Island will be elaborated as followed; the dual identity of Jim Hawkins, the gentleman and pirate as a binary pair, the dual nature of the setting and spoken language in the novel and, as last, the dualistic ending which diverts from the classical 'Robinsonade' formula.

[44] Ward: 304
[45] Marah Gubar, *Artful Dodgers: Reconceiving the Golden Age of Children's Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), eBook: 70

4.1. The dual nature of Jim Hawkins

Adventure stories from the 19th century encouraged their young readers to idolize the figure George Santayana dubbed "the schoolboy master of the world". In the 1888 survey "Juvenile Literature as It Is" Edward Salmon commented on boy's books in the attempt to discover the secret of its appeal and in the process he mentioned Defoe's Robinson Crusoe. He refers to Crusoe as a supreme figure who constitutes an ideal, a hero who dominates every situation. The Victorians recognized that Robinson Crusoe inspired many texts that set boys loose on wild islands[46]. His mere name 'Crusoe' which likely stems from the verb 'to cruise' evokes mental images of travel, exploration and adventure. Colonial expansion required quality promotion to ignite patriotic feelings in young and able men. At the time, boys' adventure stories played countless variations on the theme of adventure and conquest.

Jim Hawkins is no Crusoe, but he was surely modeled on this archetypical seafaring hero. From his very first words it is evident that he does not fit the established hero type that dominated 19th century boys' literature.

Unlike Crusoe who yearned for a life at sea, Jim only dreamed of adventure before he was drawn into one. Beforehand he was just a boy of approximately eleven to thirteen years old who lived a common life with his mother and father. The reader discovers that Jim constantly shifts between a romantic, fantasized world and his real world. Stevenson claimed *Treasure Island* was a romanticized adventure novel but Jim Hawkins is, as Huang states in his essay, 'a boy in two worlds'[47].

Jim has a dual identity; he is both a romantic and a realistic character. He embodies a conflict between traditional Victorian values and romantic aspirations. As Huang explains it; the realistic part of Jim's character presents things as they are - true to Victorian society, while the romantic part has a fantastic view of the experience - idealizing certain aspects of the adventure[48]. Stevenson commented on several Victorian values through Jim's character and

[46]Gubar: 69

[47] Jianqui Huang,"Jim Hawkins: a boy in two worlds – A discussion of character development in *Treasure Island*", *Essay*, Kristianstad University College (2009): 1

[48] Huang: 1-2

dual nature. He addressed the role of the child protagonist (hero), money (capitalism), and religion by means of Jim's experience of the adventure.

Jim is the obvious hero of the story but the adults that accompany him play critical parts in the formation of his character. At the beginning of the narrative Jim is boy captivated with ideas of adventure like all boys of his time and age. He had, presumably, read numerous stories of roving and noble conquest which created romantic images in his young mind. From the moment a mysterious pirate figure enters his family's inn Jim's childish dreams begin to churn as he constantly shifts between reality and fantasy.

Instead of becoming infatuated by the pirate's anecdotes, Jim experiences nightmares and fears the one-legged pirate from Billy Bones' tales.

"How that personage haunted my dreams, I need scarcely tell you. (…) To see him leap and run and pursue me over hedge and ditch was the worst of nightmares. And altogether I paid pretty dear for my monthly fourpenny piece, in the shape of these abominable fancies"[49].

Jim's nightmares foreshadow the horrors he would experience on his treasure hunt and while he feels discomfort in the presence of the pirate others enjoy his tales.

"(…) on looking back, they rather liked it, it was a fine excitement in a quiet country life, and there was even a party of younger men who pretended to admire him, calling him a 'true sea dog' and a 'real sea salt' and such like names, saying there was the sort of man that made England terrible at sea"[50].

These other young men are evidently controlled by imperialistic propaganda which glorified patriotic explorers and condemned pirates; however they still admire Bones because of his fantastic stories of adventure. Jim still represented the epitome of child innocence before they left Bristol but his adventure would change his naïve romanticized view at the end.

His shifting from fantasy to real world is mostly provoked by the words and actions of the adults, both pirates and gentlemen. They confuse and frustrate Jim because he repeatedly fails to interpret their genuine motives.

When the treasure map found its way into adult hands, Dr. Livesey and squire Trelawney expressed their desire to leave immediately. They are presumably bachelors, men of influence and adequate male role models for Jim who just lost his father. They place Jim in the position of cabin boy, seemingly encouraging boy readers to believe that a juvenile crewmate can

[49] Robert L. Stevenson, *Treasure Island*, Project Gutenberg, eBook: 3-11

[50] Stevenson, *Treasure Island*: 3-11

function as an invaluable asset to the campaign. Other boys' stories always characterized the boy hero as a supremely commanding figure; the monarch of every situation but Jim does not qualify. Stevenson did not employ this youthful narrator to deny the power of the adults as Defoe and others had done, instead he presents a boy who fails to evade their influence[51].

Jim may be the narrator of the story but he is not the hero in the manner of Crusoe; his description departs from the prototype Defoe established. He possesses every boy's innate curiosity but all his heroic urges during the adventure are diminished. The reason for his failure is that he is often more lucky than clever. An example is the instance of the apple barrel. What Jim heard from inside the apple barrel was sheer coincidence and he sat there dreading that the pirates might find him; he acted as a scared child, not a fearless explorer.

He experienced numerous deceitful moments with the adults but never acted upon them. Jim hears Silver addressing another young seaman in the same fashion he spoke to him:

"You may imagine how I felt when I heard this abominable old rogue addressing another in the very same words of flattery as he had used to myself. If I had been able, that I would have killed him through the barrel"[52].

His impeccable vision of Silver deteriorated as he even fantasized killing him for his duplicity but as in many situations in the book, Jim lingers between the romantic and real notion of Silver mainly because Silver constantly stokes his ego and sense of self-worth[53].

Jim never seized to fantasize about things he would say or do and because of this inertness he could never claim the title of hero.

When he retells the pirates' plan of mutiny the gentlemen "made me sit down at table beside them, poured me a glass of wine, filled my hands with raisins, and all three, one after the other, and each with a bow, drank to my good health, and their service to me, for my luck and courage"[54]. The gentlemen openly salute something Jim has absolutely no control over – sheer luck and deny him credit for his supposedly bold deeds.

Treasure Island is a two faced text because it alternates between exalting Jim to a heroic status and undermining his achievements at the same time.

[51] Gubar: 69-71

[52] Stevenson, *Treasure Island*: 76-93

[53] Gubar: 82

[54] Stevenson, *Treasure Island*: 76-93

As the novel progresses from introduction to adventure all Jim's fantasies fail to come true; the crew is disappointing, the island is desolate and uninspiring and the gold was not where it should have been. These failures puncture the boys' daydream paradigm as Stevenson denies Jim the enjoyment of mastery and departs from the Crusoe prototype[55].

Jim follows his boyish impulses on several occasions which may seem like heroic maneuvers but they end well for Jim because he is fortuitous, not insightful. The fight with the far more experienced Israel Hands provides evidence for this claim. When Hands' knife hits Jim the boy almost faints from fear. However, the experienced pirate hand somehow misses its target and the boy explorer prevails.

Stevenson presents a cautionary tale for boys where the adults symbolize the treacherous Empire that tries to lure them into its crusade. The adults prove to be the rightful rulers of the novel as the vision of juvenile potency reveals to be pure myth[56].

The notion of religion is briefly delved into on several occasions, most notably when Jim encounters the wounded Israel Hands after he kills his crewmate:

"(…) I would go to my prayers like a Christian man. 'Why?' said he. 'Now you tell me why'. 'Why?' I cried. 'You were asking me just now about the dead. (…) you've lived in sin and lies and blood (…) and you ask me why! For God's mercy, Mr. Hands, that's why"[57].

Jim's words, however, have no effect on Hands who claims that had never seen "good come o'goodness"[58]. Stevenson points to the absurdity of the idea that a boy could convert an adult to Christianity with a few chosen words hinting at devout British missionaries who forced Christianity on natives once they were conquered. The author declines to include pro-Empire propaganda and mentions religion only to ridicule the missionary efforts of the Empire[59].

Money or rather immense fortune is crucial to the plot of the story; it is the catalyst of the adventure. Jim learns the value and corruptive quality of money early in the narrative when his mother collects money from Billy Bones' dead body, horrified but determined to settle his dept to the inn. Jim even admits that his mother is greedy but neglects to acknowledge the gentlemen's avidity when they ecstatically plan the trip to Treasure Island on the mere

[55] Gubar: 75
[56] Gubar: 82
[57] Stevenson, *Treasure Island*: 179-185
[58] Stevenson, *Treasure Island*: 179-185
[59] Gubar: 78

promise of great wealth. Livesey openly asks Trelawney: "But the point is, had he money?"[60] referring to Flint's mythical riches.

The reason why Jim ignores it is his romanticized view of treasure hunting. He imagines the treasure as an ingredient of their sea adventure and believes in the moral righteousness of the gentlemen. Their social positions prevent Jim from perceiving their greed[61].

Throughout the narrative Jim witnesses the corruptive nature of money. When he finally sees the gold he attests to the horrible human cost involved in its accumulation[62], despising the imperialistic tone of their quest.

After reading *Treasure Island* the boy reader could only become demoralized to embark on such an adventure because of its unglamorous and uninspiring results.

[60] Stevenson, *Treasure Island*: 40-49
[61] Huang: 11-14
[62] Gubar: 73

4.2. The gentlemen born and gentlemen of fortune

The term meaning of 'gentleman' changed during the Victorian era from being defined by class (mainly landowners) to applying to both gentlemen by birth and profession. This definition implied certain values, standards and modes of behavior. By the 1860s 'gentlemanly' was used to describe a man's ethics and behavior regardless of birth or profession. Conceptually, a gentleman was intellectually and morally independent and had a sense of duty and self-control. One of the most illustrative characteristics was disinterestedness which meant that gentlemen should care for something other than money[63].
The image of gentlemanly was grounded on Victorian morality with the crucial notion of respectability, followed by other civic virtues. Respectability connoted tidy clothes, good manners and sobriety. Other civic virtues included temperance (the avoidance of drinking), direct and correct speech as well as personal hygiene[64].

In *Treasure Island* the reader is introduced to gentlemen born and gentlemen of fortune. As Jim discovers in the apple barrel, 'gentlemen of fortune' is a euphemism for pirates. Before Stevenson pirates in literature symbolized what happened to humans when they went native and abandoned civilized ways but Stevenson complicated the paradigm. The juxtaposition of the gentlemen born and gentlemen of fortune offers Stevenson's critique on the type of men imperialistic Victorian England created. He gives ample thought to the blurred line between them[65] as he blends the characteristics of the two opposed concepts.
Their physical appearances and language use are traits that clearly distinct them, while their motivation for the treasure hunt, their moral stand and actions overlap and are not in complete opposition as would be expected.
Stevenson offers colorful descriptions of both pirates and gentlemen to emphasize their diversity.

[63] Mitchell: 268-271
[64] Mitchell: 261-265
[65] Chamutal Noimann, "He a Cripple and I a Boy: The Pirate and the Gentlemen in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*", Washington and Jefferson College, 2012: 56-61

"(…) a tall, strong, heavy, nut-brown man , his tarry pigtail falling over the shoulder of his soiled blue coat, his hands ragged and scarred, with black broken nails, and a sabre cut across his cheek, a dirtily livid white"[66].

"He was plainly blind, for he tapped before him with a stick and wore a great green shade over his eyes and nose; and he was hunched, as if with age or weakness, and wore a huge old tattered sea-cloak with a hood that made him appear positively deformed. I never saw in my life a more dreadful-looking figure"[67].

The buccaneer's physique is strongly contrasted to the fixed civic virtues established by Victorian society. They have no apparent regard for personal hygiene or tidy clothing.

The pirates are depicted as dirty and pitiful looking creatures often deformed in some way. Their deformities are notably visible and allude to the violence that is attributed to their pirate lifestyle that does not conform to British laws or rules. In the eyes of young Jim Hawkins, a boy raised around stern Victorian gentlemen, they may as well be creatures from another world.

Deformity is a dominant trait of Stevenson's pirates but their function is not to weaken the characters rather to amplify their strong determination and will-power to overcome life's obstacles. Long John Silver, the most allusive buccaneer in the novel, has no leg and Jim is often surprised by his agility indicating that the pirates were equally able despite their disabilities. Contemporary British men placed great emphasis on physical strength and none of the men in the novel showed a lack of it, in fact, the pirates occasionally demonstrate extraordinary dexterity. Even Trelawney admits so when referring to the men he had hired as crew: "Silver and myself we got together in a few days a company and the toughest old salts imaginable—not pretty to look at, but fellows, by their faces, of the most indomitable spirit. I declare we could fight a frigate"[68]. Trelawney admired their toughness regardless of their appearances, verifying the Victorian emphasis on masculine strength.

The gentlemen born conform to the Victorian ideal and are healthy, neat men that act according to their social standing with the utmost regard for civilized behavior. The squire is described as "(…) a tall man, over six feet high, and broad in proportion, and he had a bluff, rough and ready face, all roughened and reddened and lined in his long travels. His eyebrows

[66] Stevenson, *Treasure Island*: 3-11
[67] Stevenson, *Treasure Island*: 19-26
[68] Stevenson, *Treasure Island*: 93-99

were very black, and moved readily, and this gave him a look of some temper, not bad, you would say, but quick and high"[69].

Interestingly, Stevenson scarcely describes the Victorian gentlemen which implies that the boys who read such adventure stories were familiar with their presence and needn't a reminder of their physique.

Stevenson equally addresses the notion of sobriety; the pirates are heavy rum consumers while the gentlemen practice abstinence. The gentlemen of fortune appear drunk in crucial situations like the battle at the stockade but remain dangerously able to act. The gentlemen continually comment on the pirates' rum consumption predicting it would contribute to their downfall. Silver, the pirates' captain, admits that his crewmembers cannot refuse rum while he remains sober. Sobriety is a gentleman's quality and Silver embraces this characteristic confusing both gentlemen and reader. He is capable of abstinence and departs from the pirate rum-drinking stereotype.

Silver does not conform to either extremes but could easily belong to both gentleman types. He is the ambiguous product of the shaken gentleman – pirate structure. He is undecipherable because he cannot be placed within the gentleman-pirate dichotomy. Silver's character is devised to encompass elements from both worlds because he alludes to the genuine nature of imperial Britain. Silver is charming, articulate and well-mannered while he deceives others for his own cause; he is an amiable hypocrite. His actions and speeches are premeditated; he manages to persuade Jim as well as the adults to act on his desires with a few well-chosen words.

Presented in written form *Treasure Island* and other boys' stories of the time heavily relied on the reader's imagination to envision the characters and locations. Stevenson amplified their reading experience with the implementation of unique 'pirate talk'. Stevenson had always expressed a keen interest in archaic vocabulary and *Treasure Island* was an opportunity for language play.

The correct and dull speech of the gentlemen born is overshadowed by the exotic and rich language used by the 'gents of fortune'. Stevenson made the characters easily recognizable within the narrative.

[69] Stevenson, *Treasure Island*: 19-26

"It is something to have been an old soldier, but more still to have been a doctor. There is no time to dilly-dally in our work. And so now I have made up my mind instantly, and with no time lost returned to the shore and jumped on board the jolly-boat"[70].

Livesey's speech is grammatically correct and understandable, hence in complete opposition to the almost foreign pirate talk.

"Dooty is dooty,to be sure. Well now, you look here, that was a good lay of yours last night - (...) Some of you pretty handy with a handspike-end. (…) But you mark me, cap'n, it won't do twice, by thunder! We'll have to do sentry-go and ease off a point or so on the rum. Maybe you think we were all sheet in the wind (…)"[71].

In Victorian England such talk would imply that the pirates were illiterate brutes that lacked proper education and belonged to society's underbelly. Contrary to the reader's expectations the pirates show cleverness and aptly use the power of words for manipulative purposes, most evident with Jim. Billy Bones managed to evoke nightmares in Jim with his stories, Long John Silver succeeded in creating an ally in Jim with his complementary talk even when the cabin boy knew of his double play, and Israel Hands masterfully confused Jim with his small talk. Long John Silver proves to be Captain Smollett's equal during the negotiations, steering the conversation as he desires. He relies on the same techniques with all characters that prove somehow useful to him. Silver is the master of wordplay; the enigmatic persona who confuses both other characters and the readers of the narrative.

The gentlemen in the novel are in seemingly stark contrast but they find more common ground than the reader imagines. They all embark on a quest because of the mere promise of wealth. This promise stems from mythological talk of great hidden treasure that lies buried on an exotic island far from the civilized world. Their motive is the same imperialistic drive.

Stevenson undermines the idea of Englishness and godliness as synonymous. The pirates and the official representatives of the British society are difficult to tell apart because both gentlemen born and gentlemen of fortune are greedy men who will commit violence for gold[72]. The gentlemen born could have given up on the treasure hunt when they discovered the mutiny. They should have arrested the pirates and sailed back to Bristol in true patriotic

[70] Stevenson, *Treasure Island*: 69-76
[71] Stevenson, *Treasure Island*, 93-99
[72] Gubar: 79

fashion. Instead, the gentlemen mentally drifted away from the authoritarian and imperialistic grip as they physically left the civilized world.

The combination of adventure, greed, violence with loose commitment to domestic duties is essential to Stevenson's definition of the British gentleman. Stevenson recognizes and exposes how brutality and greed are the ailments of an imperialistic society that condones the practice of stealing treasures of others in the name of God, gold and glory[73]. Even the ship that took them on their voyage is mockingly named after one of the Empire's hated rivals – Spain (*The Hispaniola*), stressing the colonial hysteria of the time.

The boy readers were surely indoctrinated to look up to Trelawney, Livesey and Smollett, but the person that captivates the attention of all readers is not a British gentleman, but a ruthless and murdering pirate – Long John Silver. He is a father figure to Jim, educating and protecting him on several occasions, treating him with respect. He talks candidly to all crewmembers evoking pity and sympathy when needed. However, he is also merciless and kills a man in cold blood when he fails to cooperate. The readers cannot help being fascinated and disgusted by his nature. Jim despises Silver for his ambivalence, but cannot help admire him for his gentlemanly qualities. His charisma arises from his flexibility as he successfully plays every role given to him[74]. Silver continually shifts sides in the treasure hunting game; deceiving both mates and readers, making him the only character in the narrative aware of the genuine state of affairs. The gentlemen born and the pirates play their parts in the game of imperialistic conquest, except for Silver who plays for his own cause, obscuring the line of distinction between gentleman and pirate[75].

This ambiguous persona is Stevenson's idea of mocking the contemporary definition of gentlemen by showing that a man who fits the gentleman criteria can be a ruthless and murderous buccaneer[76].

It would be expected from the gentlemen born to occupy the moral high ground in the narrative as they are part of a society that has a clear definition of morality. However, as mentioned before, the gentlemen appear to abandon their Victorian virtues as they depart from British soil. The voyage seemingly grants them the opportunity to loosely conform to the

[73] Noimann: 60-61
[74] Huang: 4
[75] Ward: 312
[76] Noimann: 63-64

strict rules of society without fear of punishment. The pirates work on instinct with no patriotic duty and are honest in their actions, opposed to the gentlemen.

Livesey boasts about his moral superiority because he aids the wounded pirates during their truce, but he ruthlessly leaves two pirates marooned on the island without remorse. He openly addresses Silver's amorality and duplicity, but is blind to his own.

Stevenson parodied the gentlemen born to expose the genuine face of imperialism with the creation of the perfect anti-gentleman gentleman in the form of Long John Silver. His double nature is the reflection of the Victorian duplicity which is merciless and violent under a charismatic surface.

4.3. The dichotomy of setting and a dualistic ending

The island is a crucial element of the narrative; it is the romanticized land of mystery and adventure waiting to be explored. In other adventure stories for boys of the era the places of roaming were always described with great delight. Crusoe, Rover and others portray them as exotic, green, fertile and excitingly dangerous paradises but Stevenson departs from this desert island stereotype.

Before the *Hispaniola* ever left for Skeleton Island the crew briefly stayed in Bristol. The city is not described in much detail but it is the last British soil they visit before reaching their destination. Bristol is a border between land a sea and on land the crew still abides by British law and values while at sea they abandon Victorian rules and morality[77]. This port city is where the gentlemen born and gentlemen of fortune meet and begin their adventure. Bristol is where they left their civility.

The port they visit on their campaign home is in Spanish America and Jim recollects it with glee, describing it as "the most charming contrast to our dark and bloody sojourn on the island[78]". It must be noted that the only location he describes with such merit is not British and alludes to Stevenson animosity towards imperialistic conquest and destruction of indigenous territories.

Novels about roving implied glamorized descriptions of distant locations to appeal to young boys and encourage them to fearlessly engage in imperialistic conquest as young adults. From Robinson Crusoe onward these islands were compared to Eden but Stevenson undermines this vision of the island. Jim fantasizes of the islands described by Ballantyne, Kingston and Defoe but the island he lands on dreadfully disappoints him[79].

"Grey colored woods covered a large part of the surface (…) the general color was uniform and sad. The hills ran up clear above the vegetation in spires of naked rock"[80].

[77] Huang: 1-2
[78] Stevenson, *Treasure Island*: 252
[79] Gubar: 76
[80] Stevenson, *Treasure Island*: 93-99

"Two little rivers, or rather two swamps, emptied out into these ponds, as you might call it; and the foliage round that part of the shore had a kind of poisonous brightness[81]".

Jim portrays the island as melancholic and sterile, deflating his aspiration to explore the island. Skeleton Island fails to conform to the imperialist playground paradigm as Stevenson undermines the vision of the island as inviting for treasure hunting. It is a lethal swamp and the men succumb to malaria during their stay on the island[82]. Nothing about the island is appealing to Jim as he recollects: "(…) and from the first look onward, I hated the very thought of Treasure Island[83]".

The landscape is as depressing and dull as its inhabitants. Crusoe was confronted with cannibals while Jim encounters sea lions and a deranged but harmless Ben Gunn. Jim anticipated an encounter with savages and wild beasts and in his romantic daydream he mistakes the noises of sea lions for unknown monstrous beasts and is again disappointed.

He confused Ben Gunn for a cannibal as he yearned for some excitement on the desolate island[84]. The island did not offer Jim any perils and the left his boyish imperialistic fantasies unfulfilled.

The ending of the narrative is as dissatisfying as the island and proves to be anticlimactic in comparison to Crusoe or others. Stevenson denies Jim the satisfaction of uncovering the prized treasure; it had already been lifted upon the arrival of Silver, his crew and hostage Jim. The unearthing of the loot is never described and leaves the reader deprived of the satisfaction of discovery[85].

The journey, the battles and the loading of the treasure at the end force Jim to rethink his idea of adventure. He counts the lost lives and hardships they endured to collect gold and money; turning a supposed exciting and noble quest into a savage materialistic trip. He accounts how the surviving crew members spent their shares but never mentions his own, amplifying his disinterest in the prize.

His adventure proves to be upsetting and he is traumatized for life. He decides that he would never roam again: "Oxen and wain-ropes would not bring me back again to that accursed island; and the worst dreams I ever have are when I hear the surf booming about its coasts or

[81] Stevenson, *Treasure Island*: 55-62
[82] Gubar: 76
[83] Stevenson, *Treasure Island*:55-62
[84] Gubar: 76
[85] Gubar: 73

start upright in bed with the sharp voice of Captain Flint still ringing in my ears: 'Pieces of eight!'"[86]

All that he gained from the journey were nightmares while other fictional child explorers described their time on the islands as the best days of their lives. Jim departs from those boy heroes as he explains that roving is the stuff of nightmares. He is repelled to ever set foot on 'terror island' even though he knows there is another undiscovered treasure[87].

The ending of the novel is anticlimactic because the whole narrative steers towards the unearthing of a mythical pirate treasure. The reader is left deceived and disappointed with its supposed hero who does not encourage adventure and exploration but rather warns about the dark sides of such a conquest.

[86] Stevenson, *Treasure Island*: 252
[87] Gubar: 71-72

5. Dichotomies in Stevenson's later novels

Dichotomies and binary pairs became occurring narrative tools in Stevenson's work. However, these dualities were commonly discussed in his following novels like *Kidnapped, The Master of Ballantrae* and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.* Stevenson elaborated on dualities in these novels with more ease than in *Treasure Island* as his character and plot development improved.

In The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mister Hyde he reveals the coexistence of good and evil and their struggle to prevail in every individual.

The Durie brothers in *The Master of Ballantrae* deal with the constraints and hypocrisies of society driven by imperialistic conquest with destructive consequences.

On the imaginary *Beach of Falesa* savages struggle with the colonialists who seek malicious ways to subdue the natives but consider themselves morally superior.

The dualities in Stevenson's latter novels and short stories address worldly, intellectual, emotional and spiritual struggles of the Victorian man in the same manner as in *Treasure Island*. The main difference is that *Treasure Island* was intended for boys, while his other works appealed to more adult readers. Nevertheless, dichotomies never ceased to fascinate Stevenson who employed them in every narrative.

5.1. *The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mister Hyde*

This novel or novella was written only three years after *Treasure Island* while Stevenson was still bedridden. According to the author, the idea for the novel came to him in a dream[88]. The story revolves around the observations and experiences of an upstanding lawyer, Utterson and his friend Enfield who recollect the incident of Doctor Henry Jekyll and Mister Edward Hyde. It is a story of a man who brings out his inner demon by drinking a concoction of his own making. A gothic novella in the manner of Shelley's *Frankenstein,* Stevenson creates an aura of suspense and mystery only to uncover that the Doctor struggles with the Victorian concept of morality.

The case deals with a man who is frightened to openly release his inner evil self. He experiments and invents a concoction that allows him to completely dissect his good from his evil self, creating two definite personalities within one body. Stevenson believed that good and evil not only coexisted in man but collaborated; erasing the fine line of distinction. Jekyll and Hyde and the Durie brothers represent this notion.

Dr. Jekyll is a successful and brilliant doctor, respected in society. He is a 'true Victorian man' with all the right qualities. The authors of the paper *Robert Louis Stevenson Philosophically: Dualism and Existentialism within the Gothic Convention* noted this in the physical description of Dr. Jekyll: "(…) as he now sat on the opposite side of the fire – large, well made, smooth-faced man of fifty, with something of a slyish cast perhaps, but every mark of capacity and kindness (…)"[89]. Mr. Hyde is his binary opposite, he is amoral and pure evil, in fact, he is so evil that the body of Dr. Jekyll becomes completely distorted when Hyde takes over: "Mr. Hyde was pale and dwarfish, he gave an impression of deformity without any nameable malformation, he had a displeasing smile (…) and he spoke with a husky, whispering, somewhat broken voice (…)"[90].

[88] Shubh M. Singh and Subho Chakrabarti, "A study in dualism: The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mister Hyde", Indian Journal of Psychiatry, 50 (3) (Jul-Sep 2008): The Author and the Novel

[89] Urszula Czyżewska and Grzegrorz Głąb, "Robert Louis Stevenson philosophically: Dualism and existentialism within the Gothic convention", *Roczniki Filozoficzne* LXII, 3 (2014): 22

[90] Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mister Hyde*. Project Gutenberg. Ebook: The Story at the Door

The ‘two men’ who reside in Dr. Jekyll are noticeable different - even the doctor’s physique changes depending on the ‘self’ in control. Singh and Chakrabarti observed that Stevenson created Jekyll and Hyde as the ultimate binary pair that makes up a ‘normal’ individual. Jekyll is a man sick of duplicity, aware of his inner struggle between the good and the bad and ready to embrace them both instead of suppressing the bad; as would be expected from any Victorian gentleman. He wants to enjoy the pleasures of both parts without being stopped by the demands of the other. Dr. Jekyll is a deviant in Victorian society as the aristocrats are only superficially refined and certainly hold many dark secrets underneath the polished Victorian surface. Stevenson bluntly comments on the Victorian society as a whole[91]. Even though Mr. Hyde (evil) is finally subdued by Dr. Jekyll (good), good does not prevail in the classical sense because the destruction of Hyde (evil) meant the death of Jekyll (good) as well. Stevenson alludes that life under constraints kills the essence of people’s character because it forces them to play a part in the charade called society.

All the other characters deflect from evil. Utterson and Enfield are both extremely appalled by the actions of the mysterious Mr. Hyde while Dr. Jekyll embraces him as an essential part of his persona. Stevenson discards the Christian notion that we are essentially good souls, tempted by evil. Instead, he claims that good and evil exist equally in all and that society is double faced for averting its head from the apparent evil amongst us. Henry Jekyll states so himself: “(…) I was in no sense a hypocrite: both sides of me were in dead earnest; I was no more myself when I laid aside restraints and plunged into shame, then when I labored, in the eye of day, at the furtherance of knowledge or the relief of the sorrow and suffering” and “I thus drew steadily to the truth (…) that man is not truly one, but two”[92].

As apparent as the theme of duality is in the main character, Stevenson also creates a subtle distinction between the upper and lower class as they were viewed in Victorian England – two completely different worlds. He provides descriptions of well-maintained and safe city streets contrasted with the dirty, neglected and hostile areas of the city. In doing so he gives the reader a social dimension of contrast or duality[93].

Stevenson presents the idea of the omnipresent duality around us; Hyde is amoral, he wanders in dark alleys, he represents poverty, lawlessness and the rejected. Jekyll is morality; he

[91] Singh and Chakrabarti: The Author and the Novel

[92] Stevenson, *The Strange Case*: Henry Jekyll’s full statement of the case

[93] Czyżewska and Głąb: 20

represents the upper class and everything that is praised in society[94]. Hyde leaves the house through the back door, creeping out of sight while Jekyll uses the main entrance. Symbolically Hyde is the demon that resides in the back end of an individual's mind crouching behind an agape door.

This narrative revolves around inner struggle, creating moral confusion and frustration. Man possesses the power to create and destroy, but also to choose. It is left to wonder why a person chooses good over evil and vice versa. At one point Dr. Jekyll was almost omnipotent but rejected all for the good of society. Was he a hero, a coward or perhaps both?

One more statement from the story should be mentioned: "I say two, because the state of my own knowledge does not pass beyond this point"[95]. This sentence leaves the question of human nature open to debate. Stevenson wondered how many 'characters' reside within a person; how many faces does one carry? Are we individuals or society's construct? Stevenson was certain of only one thing - we are not good *or* evil but good, evil and everything in between.

[94] Czyżewska and Głąb: 28

[95] Stevenson, *The Strange Case*: Henry Jekyll's full statement of the case

5.2. *The Master of Ballantrae*

The Master of Ballantrae was written in 1889 and is concerned with the rivalry between two brothers, James and Henry Durie over the control of the ancient aristocratic estate of the Durrisdeer family. The story is retold by the servant of the house whose recollections are fairly biased. It is the reader who must examine his narrative and decide upon the brothers' characters. The decision to tell the story through a third party rather than the main character(s) makes Stevenson a true educator as the reader is forced to think about the character's actions and not mindlessly absorb the narrative.

The novel is set during the Jacobite rebellion of 1745 and the father decides to send one son to support the rebellion while the other remains loyal to the Hanoverian crown. A clever move, since he wins either way[96]. The father flips a coin and the older brother and heir to the estate must leave to support the Jacobites. The younger brother unwillingly becomes heir. This decision becomes the catalyst of the brothers' descend.

James is presumed dead after a horrific battle but not much time passes before the family discovers that James or as he is referred to, the Master of Ballantrae, is alive in France. This discovery would change Henry's life for the worse. His older brother, whom MacKellar compares to the biblical serpent, is determined to make Henry's life living hell. He begins to demand money for a careless life he intends to lead[97]. The curious part of his demands is that he does not wish to reclaim his rightful place as heir. James seems to be content as he is free from the social obligations of his title and has no other constraints in life. He tends to usurp his family's wealth and his brother's good nature.

Countless following events make the reader believe the steward's categorization based on a fixed dichotomy: Henry is good, and James is evil[98]. Be that as it may, certain events change both MacKellar and Henry – the seemingly good characters. Mackellar, a devout Christian, faces numerous moral uncertainties throughout the narrative. He is present during the duel between the brothers after James secretly comes back home when Henry refused to send him

[96] Luca Liprini, "The moral problematic as a recurring theme in Robert L. Stevenson's novels: *The Master of Ballantrae* and *Kidnapped*", *Dissertation*, Sigilum Universitas Islandiae (2011): 1
[97] Liprini: 7
[98] Liprini: 1

money. Henry thinks he killed James and begins to fall into degeneration while James is still alive and carried away by merchants. After this duel Henry, previously portrayed as morally superior, begins to embrace some of James' psychological traits[99]. MacKellar takes notice and begins to doubt his soundness. Henry is completely devoured by his brother's needs and slowly dwells into insanity. Other characters in the narrative seem to overlook James' evil nature and often side with him. Even MacKellar comes to the verge of loyalty when he is aboard the ship with James who craves to find his fleeing brother in New York. James taunts him with word play and even makes himself likeable despite the fact that MacKellar tried to throw him overboard[100]. The minor characters' fascinations with James suspiciously hint at man's temptation of evil. James is compared to the devil and almost biblically converts MacKellar to his cause. Yet, James is not the devil; he is merely a man who operates on his own interests and desires contrasting Victorian humanitarianism which commanded that one should put the needs of others before his own. MacKellar and the others secretly desire James' freedom but would never admit and step out of their Victorian constraints.

However, James who cut off all his connections to society never seems to fully abandon those ties to civility. The reason why he haunts Henry is not because he is pure evil as MacKellar suggests but because he cannot desert the remaining link to his former self; proving that he is not entirely free.

In the end both brothers die in a jungle and are buried alongside each other. The jungle is a symbol of wild and unexplored territories of the human mind where both brothers got lost in the end, driven to madness. They shared the same faith as Jekyll and Hyde.

The three main characters of this novel are, arguably, the most complex characters Stevenson created. They present the dual nature of man; all in their unique way. MacKellar is the moral Christian who abides all laws of society. He praises goodness and condemns evil. However, the reader reveals him to be false as he tries to commit the ultimate sin – murder. In truth, he demonstrates the complexity of morality, a theme Stevenson enjoys to revisit in almost every novel[101].

Henry is a presumed martyr, the misunderstood good character tormented by his evil counterpart. At the beginning it is easy to differentiate, to recognize the binary pair at hand;

[99] Liprini: 11
[100] Lirpini: 14
[101] Liprini: 14

Henry is good, James is evil. However, as the novel moves on Henry transforms in the manner of Dr. Jekyll. Henry slowly transforms into a version of James but never gives in to the 'evil'. His unwillingness to acknowledge the essence of his nature ultimately drives him to his death.

James is the most intriguing character. As Liprini puts it 'he shows the outstanding ability in demonstrating how human nature is morally ambiguous and impossible to reduce to absolute categories that distinguish what is exactly good and evil'[102]. Liprini noted how James is capable to reinvent himself according to the situation and knows how to express his good or evil nature depending on his needs. Henry is the Dr. Jekyll who died for the false sense of salvation, James is the transformed Mr. Hyde who accepts his inner demon and tries to live accordingly[103].

As the brothers move through the story the world they live in is also described in dichotomy[104]. The landscape around them changes according to their inner change. At home where everything is good and familiar, Henry is good. As he sails to New York his transformation and descend commence. The wilderness they both die in represents the dark side of the human soul, a place we rather not visit but nevertheless essential to our being.

Furthermore, there is also a linguistic dichotomy; the use of English and the use of Scottish where English labels rationality and stiffness, while the latter is close to irrationality and emotionality. Both brothers use the accents interchangeably[105].

The actions of the two brothers reflect the corruption of the Victorian society where title and money are synonymous to respectability. It shows a society which firmly and blindly clenches to its traditions because doubt would cause its downfall. The brothers turn to Scottish when they break out of their Victorian constraints and show their emotions; a sentimental link for Stevenson but also a break from social character and a glimpse of a free self.

[102] Liprini: 14
[103] Liprini: 19
[104] Liprini: 19
[105] Liprini: 12

5.3. *The Beach of Falesa*

Stevenson wrote the short stories in *Island Night's Entertainment* on the island of Samoa. During the last years of his life Stevenson became involved in the lives of the natives of Samoa. Living among the native people, eating and drinking with them and sharing their stories allowed Stevenson to see how they were treated by the 'civilized West'. His criticism is apparent in this short story about a British copra (dried coconut kernel) trader on the fictional island of Falesa where the civilized West and the colonized savages are presented as a binary pair.

John Wiltshire arrives on the island Falesa where he meets a rival trader named Case. After some drinking and friendly conversation Case arranges Wiltshire to marry a local girl, Uma. First presumed to be a friendly gesture from his new friend, Wiltshire later discovers that Uma is cursed; she has a taboo on her. Because of this taboo the other natives refuse to conduct business with Wiltshire, from which Case naturally benefits. Wiltshire later hears rumors that Case had done similar things to other traders.

Wiltshire and Case are introduced as representatives of the British Empire. At the time of the territorial race for expansion the British believed they were the best in the world. Their advanced technology encouraged a sense of self –evident superiority[106] and the two men act accordingly. They both belong to this superior nation, yet Case decides to sabotage Wiltshire for the purpose of accumulating more wealth and covering more trading territory. In a sense Case symbolically embodies the British Empire which is apt to go to any length to hinder other colonial nations.

Wiltshire also discovers that the natives are afraid of Case, suspecting him to have demonic powers. A missionary who came to the island told him: "I am afraid you have a dangerous enemy. This man Case is very clever and seems really wicked"[107]. Wiltshire finds out that Case visits a particular part of the woods and conjures tricks and makes noises that scare the natives. He then uncovers that he performs these tricks with the help of modern tools like luminous paint.

[106] Mitchell: 273-280

[107] Stevenson, *Island Nights' Entertainment: The Beach of Falesa*. Project Gutenberg, Ebook: Chapter III

Religion lay at the foundation of the Empire, but Case shamelessly casts aside religion and uses modern devices to deceive the natives and establish his superiority. The abandonment of religion might stand for the Victorian doubt in the age of great scientific turmoil but instead of using technology and humanitarianism to better the lives of the natives Case uses them for his own purposes.

In the end Wiltshire decides to blow up the shrine and destroy Case's reputation, killing him in the process.

Wiltshire is described as wild, fiery and temperamental; he is a semiliterate bigot who looks down on natives, women and missionaries[108].

Uma, his savage wife, treats him with respect and he becomes civilized through domestication on the island, since he was a savage colonialist beforehand, just like Case[109]. When he kills Case Wiltshire rids the islanders of a racially superior exploiter[110], but would have done it without Uma?

Wiltshire is the supposed hero of the story because he disposes the island of its oppressor but he would have never come to that state of mind alone. His wife is the impetus of his transformation. The transformation in Jekyll and Hyde was destructive while Wiltshire's transformation is constructive in the way that he casts off imperialistic restraints to act against the oppressor instead of joining him. Stevenson implies that there is much to learn about goodness and respectability from societies that have not yet fallen under the corruptive influence of imperialism. Stevenson was aware of the deterioration of indigenous societies under the British Empire and tried to distort the image of colonialism.

Wiltshire seems to become free of his prejudices after freeing Uma's tribe, but remains habitual to them which is evident in his concern for his children: "(…) and there is nobody thinks less of half-castes than I do, but they're mine, and about all I got"[111].

[108] Jerome Meckier, *Robert Louis Stevenson and The Beach of Falesa: A Study in Victorian Publishing with the Original Text by Barry Menikoff* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982). Jstor : 489

[109] Maxwell: 45

[110] Meckier: 489

[111] Stevenson, *Beach of Falesa*: Chapter V

Stevenson examines dualities in the colonialist world of Victorian Britain. Instead of portraying the trader as a literate, brave and gallant British explorer, Wiltshire's character is the complete opposite. His language is full of slang, racist and sexist slurs[112] which make him seem even more appalling. As Menikoff noticed, Stevenson set a very crafty trap for the original reader (the Victorian society) to feel superior to Wiltshire as they notice discrepancies between his actions and words but soon to realize that the expressed attitude the trader refuses to admit he has outgrown, are actually their own, that is, their civilization's[113].

[112] Meckier: 489
[113] Meckier: 489-490

Conclusion

Stevenson was a master of word play who enjoyed his idle life filled with travel and exploration. The characters he invented reflected his boyish nature as well as anxieties that were the product of a rapidly changing world. He was an avid critic of Victorian society and detested many of its aspects, foremost imperialistic conquest and British superiority.

Treasure Island was his first literary success in which he addressed his thoughts on the ambiguity of human nature and society. He created dichotomies and patiently explained to the contemporary readers that the world is not good or evil but a combination of both. Long John Silver is one of the most complex characters he invented as he embodies the dichotomy of the British society; he is the ultimate anti-gentleman gentleman.

Stevenson devised this narrative to be a caution tale for boys. It is meant to entertain its reader but also to educate him on adult instruments of manipulation and society's fabricated façade. He never seized to implement dualities in his narratives as they were useful explorative devices.

Jekyll and Hyde address an individual's a moral struggle as well as society's anxieties of the time. The Durie brothers explore the boundaries of fictitious freedom while Wiltshire depicts the savage countenance of a seemingly civilized nation. All Stevenson's characters are bound by their dual identities which deal with different questions about the human nature.

True to his educational mindset Stevenson never forced his ideas and beliefs on his readers but rather explored the complexity of humanity with them through his narratives.

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